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HEADLINE: Nonsmoking Business Can Mean Money in Bank, Conference Told

BYLINE: By Marcia Slacum Greene, Washington Post Staff Writer

BODY:

Applicants for jobs at Lyndon Saunders' inn in Dallas are asked whether they have smoked tobacco or marijuana in the last six months. If the answer to either question is yes, the applicant is told not to fill out the remainder of the application. Saunders does not hire smokers.

Yesterday, Saunders, who calls his business the Non-Smokers Inn, was among the speakers at the First World Conference on Nonsmokers' Rights, held in downtown Washington. Saunders stressed that he saves thousands of dollars each year by having only nonsmoking employes and guests. Rooms can be cleaned faster and do not have to be painted as often and insurance costs are lower, he said.

The nonsmokers' conference, which drew U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, was sponsored by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and was attended by about 200 persons from the United States and Canada.

Koop urged nonsmokers to join to form a "nonsmoking majority" and regain control of their environment. He said smoking was no longer the "exclusive issue" of researchers but an issue for "husbands and wives, for workers, for children, for the elderly, for many millions of people who do not smoke and who have a right to a smoke-free environment."

"What you are doing here today and will continue to do, I would hope . . . is to claim ownership of this health issue in the name of the nonsmoking majority," Koop said.

Participants exchanged information about legislation addressing nonsmokers' rights, shared successful methods for getting employers to establish smoking policies and even received copies of a nonsmokers' song.

"This conference gives us the best opportunity to share our knowledge and make ourselves more effective," said John F. Banzhaf III, ASH's executive director. "Our goal is to protect the right of the nonsmoker to breathe air that is unpolluted. The people here are about making changes. These are not just public health conference hoppers."

Robert A. Rosner, executive director of the Institute for Occupational Smoking Policy in Seattle, advised the conference participants to be prepared to encounter some hostility when trying to get businesses to establish smoking policies. He noted that employers often find it cheaper and less troublesome to establish a total ban on smoking rather than establishing smoking sections.

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Rosner said the nonsmokers' conference will send an important message around the country.

"It is a reflection on the fact that there is a strong movement across the country," Rosner said. "Just in the last six months people who never thought it possible to get a smoking policy established at their jobs have hope because it has been done in other places."

William E. Alli, chairman of the health and safety committee for Local 1534 of the American Federation of Government Employees and a conference participant, said that persistence is a key to getting change.

Alli works for the U.S. Agency for International Development in Washington and was active in getting the agency's smoking policy changed.

After a survey revealed that a majority of 1,015 employes favored limits on smoking, the agency established new regulations, including a ban on smoking in areas shared by two or more employes unless all employes agree to permit smoking.

GRAPHIC: Picture, Donald Gordon Draves . . . among 200 at nonsmokers conference.

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